



Point of View

Dear Marketplace Friend,

Okay, so we're heading home from Busan, South Korea. Cheri and I spent the week with Franklin Graham & team; his Festival drew 325,000 people to hear the Gospel and make their decision about trusting Jesus Christ. Up early on Monday morning, catch the flight to Tokyo to connect to our Los Angeles-bound plane. Wireless internet in the Korean Air lounge; use Skype to call home, where - compliments of the International Dateline - it was late Sunday evening.

"Hey, Bob-o," my son-in-law says, "Erin and Shannon are up at your house getting your stuff out of the house. Try to call; they may answer..."

Half-a-world away, and we get news of the arson-set fire that was, at that point, just three hours old. Pushed by wind gusts of 60+ MPH, the as-yet-unnamed wildfire was out of control. Our neighbors were loading up and leaving; the evacuation order was voluntary, but people were taking no chances...

They answered on the third ring; we packed our irreplaceables through "remote control," as we gave them the "A-List" of things that shouldn't stay. Family pictures; insurance policies; things we would need in the next few days regardless of where we were sleeping. Close the internet connection, go to Terminal 1/Gate 26... and board the plane for the 10 hour flight across the Pacific...



Catch your breath: the drama lessened. We landed, called home... and got the word that the winds had shifted. Nearly 9000 acres have burned - and it's only 30% contained - but it's blowing away from us. We headed home from the airport with two cars to unpack, along with our luggage... but our home spared, for now.

Fire. It doesn't matter where you are, what culture you're in, what language you're speaking: the idea of fire brings universal reaction. Faced with fire, the human response is, "Grab and go." Get whatever you can, and flee. Leave the unnecessary; rescue the valuables; ultimately, it's people over stuff. Get outta there...

The biblical record of history reports that God used floodwaters to clear-out the debauchery of the past; the declaration of the Scriptures is that God will use fire as a future Act of God to execute judgment on the human impact on the creation: "...the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept

for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men... The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him." (2 Peter 3:7-14)

Faced with fire, hierarchy of value sifts the mundane from the meaningful. Things that matter are refined in purity; things that don't are reduced to ash heaps.

"Dad, what do you want us to get for you?" My answer was instantaneous: the only thing that I needed from home was with me - Cheri. Everything else was second-rate...

I think there's a benefit to asking - and, answering - that question, every once in a while. What's in your pile that's really worth risking yourself to salvage?

Paul says that the Lord Jesus will use fire to sort out the best of our life's work, as we end our earthly journey and move heavenward: *"...his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is*

burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames..." (1 Corinthians 3:13-15)

Fire. We have been spared, as of 12:45pm Monday, anyway. One day - soon? - we won't be spared; we'll be evaluated. May we - you, and I - pass that test, with a reward to show for it!

Bob Shank

Bob Shank is Founder and Chief Mentoring Officer of The Master's Program (TMP).

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